IN THE CLAIMS:

1. (Currently amended) A method of joining first and second tubular elements, said method comprising the steps of:

providing a first tubular element having a first axis, a first portion with a radially outwardly facing surface and a first connecting assembly;

providing a second tubular element having a second axis, a second portion with a radially inwardly facing surface, and a second connecting assembly;

aligning the first and second tubular elements in a preassembly state with the first and second axes substantially coincident and the first portion adjacent to the second portion;

relatively axially moving the first and second tubular elements from the preassembly state towards each other into a first relative axial position; and

with the first and second tubular elements in the first relative axial position, relatively moving the first and second tubular elements around the first and second axes from a first relative rotational position into a second relative rotational position, and thereby causing the first and second connecting assemblies to cooperate so as to draw the first and second portions axially towards each other [[with]] wherein the first and second tubular elements are in a second relative axial position,

wherein at least one of the radially inwardly and outwardly facing ~~surface~~ surfaces is tapered so that by reason of the tapering a frictional force generated between the radially inwardly and outwardly facing surfaces on the first and second portions is caused to be greater with the first and second tubular elements in the second relative axial position than with the first and second tubular elements in the first relative axial position,

wherein the step of causing the first and second connecting assemblies to cooperate comprises causes the first and second connecting assemblies to cooperate to releasably block the first and second tubular elements in the second relative rotational position.

2. (original) The combination according to claim 1 wherein one of the first and second connecting assemblies comprises a first radially extending projection and the other of the first and second connecting assemblies has a first groove in which the first projection guidingly moves as the first and second tubular elements are changed between the first and second relative rotational positions.

3. (original) The combination according to claim 1 wherein the first portion has a first radially outwardly extending projection and the second portion has a first groove in which the first projection guidingly moves as the first and second tubular elements are changed between the first and second relative rotational positions.

4. (original) The combination according to claim 3 wherein the second portion has a first radially inwardly extending projection which extends into the first groove and as the first and second tubular elements are changed from the first relative rotational position into the second relative rotational position the first radially outwardly extending projection and first radially inwardly extending projection interact so that at least one of a) the first radially outwardly extending projection deforms radially inwardly and b) the first radially inwardly extending projection deforms radially outwardly to allow the first radially outwardly

extending projection and first radially inwardly extending projection to move past each other in a circumferential direction to thereby allow the first and second circumferential facing surfaces to confront each other.

5. (Previously presented) In combination:

a first tubular element having a first axis, a first portion with a radially outwardly facing surface and a first connecting assembly at a first circumferentially facing surface; and

a second tubular element having a second portion with a second axis, a radially inwardly facing surface, and a second connecting assembly with a second circumferentially facing surface,

the first portion extendable within the second portion so that the radially inwardly facing surface on the second tubular element surrounds the radially outwardly facing surface on the first tubular element,

the first and second tubular elements positionable in a first relative axial position wherein relative movement of the first and second tubular elements around the first and second axes between a) a first relative rotational position and b) a second relative rotational position causes the first and second connecting assemblies to cooperate to draw the first and second portions axially towards each other,

the first and second connecting assemblies cooperating so that the first and second circumferentially facing surfaces confront each other with the first and second tubular elements in the second relative rotational position to thereby block relative movement of

the first and second tubular elements from the second relative rotational position back into the first relative rotational position,

wherein the first portion has a first radially outwardly extending projection and the second portion has a first groove in which the first projection guidingly moves as the first and second tubular elements are changed between the first and second relative rotational positions,

wherein the second portion has a first radially inwardly extending projection which extends into the first groove and as the first and second tubular elements are changed from the first relative rotational position into the second relative rotational position the first radially outwardly extending projection and first radially inwardly extending projection interact so that at least one of a) the first radially outwardly extending projection deforms radially inwardly and b) the first radially inwardly extending projection deforms radially outwardly to allow the first radially outwardly extending projection and first radially inwardly extending projection to move past each other in a circumferential direction to thereby allow the first and second circumferential facing surfaces to confront each other,

wherein the second portion has a second radially inwardly extending projection which extends into the first groove and defines a third circumferentially facing surface facing in the same circumferential direction as the second circumferentially facing surface,

the first and second tubular elements repositionable from the first relative rotational position past the second relative rotational position to a third relative rotational position wherein the first and third circumferentially facing surfaces confront each other to thereby block relative movement of the first and second tubular elements from the third relative rotational position back into the second relative rotational position,

the first and second connecting assemblies cooperating to draw the first and second portions axially towards each other further with the first and second tubular elements in the third relative rotational position than with the first and second tubular elements in the second relative rotational position.

6. (original) The combination according to claim 5 wherein the first and second radially inwardly extending projections define a first receptacle therebetween in which the first radially outwardly extending projection extends with the first and second tubular elements in the second relative rotational position, the first receptacle dimensioned so that the first radially outwardly extending projection is substantially blocked against movement in opposite circumferential directions within the first groove.

7. (original) The combination according to claim 5 wherein the second tubular element has an axially extending entry groove which is contiguous with the first groove.

8. (original) The combination according to claim 3 wherein the first and second tubular elements are positionable in a second relative axial position wherein relative movement of the first and second tubular elements from the first relative rotational position into the second relative rotational position causes the first and second connecting assemblies to draw the first and second portions axially towards each other further than with the first and second tubular elements in the first relative axial position and the first and second tubular elements moved from the first relative rotational position into the second relative rotational position.

9. (original) The combination according to claim 8 wherein the second portion has a second groove in which the first projection guidingly moves as the first and second tubular elements are moved from the first relative rotational position into the second relative rotational position with the first and second tubular elements in the second relative axial position.

10. (original) The combination according to claim 9 wherein the first groove has a first axial rise and the second groove has a second axial rise and the first and second axial rises are approximately equal.

11. (Previously presented) The combination according to claim 9 wherein the second tubular element has an axially extending entry groove which is contiguous with the first and second grooves.

12. (original) The combination according to claim 3 wherein the first portion has a second radially outwardly extending projection and the second portion has a second groove in which the second radially outwardly extending projection guidingly moves as the first and second tubular elements are changed between the first and second relative rotational positions.

13. (original) The combination according to claim 12 wherein the first and second radially outwardly extending projections are at substantially diametrically opposite locations on the first portion.

14. (original) The combination according to claim 12 wherein the first and second radially outwardly extending projections are at substantially the same circumferential location on the first portion.

15. (original) The combination according to claim 3 wherein the first radially outwardly extending projection has an elongate shape with a length.

16. (original) The combination according to claim 15 wherein the length of the first radially outwardly extending projection is directed in a circumferential direction at an angle to a plane orthogonal to the second axis.

17. (original) The combination according to claim 1 wherein the radially outwardly facing surfaces on the first tubular element and radially inwardly facing surface on the second tubular element are relatively dimensioned so that the radially outwardly facing surface and radially inwardly facing surface are urged against each other with a frictional force that is greater with the first and second tubular elements in the second relative rotational position than with the first and second tubular elements in the first relative rotational position.

18. (original) The combination according to claim 1 herein the first and second portions comprise a flexible plastic material.

19. (original) The combination according to claim 1 wherein one of the first and second tubular elements has a fitting for connection to a fluid blower.

20. (original) The combination according to claim 19 in combination with a fluid blower to which the fitting is connected so that fluid propelled by the fluid blower is directed through the first and second tubular elements.

21. (Currently amended) A method of joining first and second tubular elements, said method comprising the steps of:

providing a first tubular element having a first axis, a first portion with a radially outwardly facing surface and a first connecting assembly;

providing a second tubular element having a second axis, a second portion with a radially inwardly facing surface, and a second connecting assembly;

aligning the first and second tubular elements in a preassembly state with the first and second axes substantially coincident and the first portion adjacent to the second portion;

relatively axially moving the first and second tubular elements from the preassembly state towards each other into a first relative axial position; [[and]]

with the first and second tubular elements in the first relative axial position, relatively moving the first and second tubular elements around the first and second axes from a first relative rotational position into a second relative rotational position, and thereby causing the first and second connecting assemblies to cooperate so as to draw the first and second

portions axially towards each other [[with]] wherein the first and second tubular elements are in a second relative axial position,

wherein ~~at least one of~~ the radially inwardly and outwardly facing surfaces ~~is tapered~~ are configured so that ~~by reason of the tapering~~ a frictional force generated between the radially inwardly and outwardly facing surfaces on the first and second portions is caused to be greater with the first and second tubular elements in the second relative axial position than with the first and second tubular elements in the first relative axial position,

wherein the step of causing the first and second connecting assemblies to cooperate comprises causing the first and second connecting assemblies to cooperate to releasably block the first and second tubular elements in the second relative rotational position;

relatively axially moving the first and second tubular elements from the preassembly state towards each other into a third relative axial position that is different than the first relative axial position; and

with the first and second tubular elements in the third relative axial position, relatively rotating the first and second tubular elements into a third relative rotational position wherein a frictional force generated between the radially inwardly and outwardly facing surfaces is different than a frictional force generated between the radially inwardly and outwardly facing surfaces resulting from the tubular elements changing from the first relative axial position and first relative rotational position into the second relative rotational position.

22. (currently amended) [[The]] A method of joining first and second tubular elements ~~according to claim 21~~, said method comprising the steps of:

providing a first tubular element having a first axis, a first portion with a radially outwardly facing surface and a first connecting assembly;

providing a second tubular element having a second axis, a second portion with a radially inwardly facing surface, and a second connecting assembly;

aligning the first and second tubular elements in a preassembly state with the first and second axes substantially coincident and the first portion adjacent to the second portion;

relatively axially moving the first and second tubular elements from the preassembly state towards each other into a first relative axial position;

with the first and second tubular elements in the first relative axial position, relatively moving the first and second tubular elements around the first and second axes from a first relative rotational position into a second relative rotational position, and thereby causing the first and second connecting assemblies to cooperate so as to draw the first and second portions axially towards each other so that the first and second tubular elements achieve a second relative axial position,

wherein at least one of the radially inwardly and outwardly facing surfaces is tapered so that by reason of the tapering a frictional force generated between the radially inwardly and outwardly facing surfaces on the first and second portions is caused to be greater with the first and second tubular elements in the second relative axial position than with the first and second tubular elements in the first relative axial position,

wherein the step of causing the first and second connecting assemblies to cooperate comprises causing the first and second connecting assemblies to cooperate to releasably block the first and second tubular elements in the second relative rotational position,

wherein the step of causing the first and second connecting assemblies to cooperate to cooperatively releasably block the first and second tubular elements in the second relative rotational position comprises causing circumferentially facing surfaces on the first and second connecting assemblies to confront each other ~~and further comprising the step of~~; and

relatively moving the first and second tubular elements around the first and second axes to a third relative rotational position arrived at by moving the first and second tubular elements from the first relative rotational position to and beyond the second relative rotational position and wherein circumferentially facing surfaces in the first and second connecting assemblies confront each other to block movement of the first and second elements from the third relative rotational position back into the second relative rotational position.

23. (currently amended) The method of joining first and second tubular elements according to claim 21 wherein the step of causing the first and second connecting assemblies to cooperate comprises causing a projection on one of the first and second connecting assemblies to move in a groove with an axial rise on the other of the first and second connecting assemblies as an incident of the first and second tubular elements being relatively rotated.

24. (Previously presented) The method of joining first and second tubular elements according to claim 21 wherein the step of causing the first and second connecting assemblies to cooperate comprises causing a plurality of axially spaced projections to interact one each with a plurality of grooves each with an axial rise.

25. (currently amended) The method of joining first and second tubular elements according to claim 21 further comprising the step of operatively connecting the tubular element to a portable fluid blower so that fluid propelled by the portable fluid blower is directed through the joined first and second tubular elements.

26. (Previously presented) In combination:

a first tubular element having a first axis, a first portion with a radially outwardly facing surface and a first connecting assembly at a first circumferentially facing surface; and

a second tubular element having a second portion with a second axis, a radially inwardly facing surface, and a second connecting assembly with a second circumferentially facing surface,

the first portion extendable within the second portion so that the radially inwardly facing surface on the second tubular element surrounds the radially outwardly facing surface on the first tubular element,

the first and second tubular elements positionable in a first relative axial position wherein relative movement of the first and second tubular elements around the first and

second axes between a) a first relative rotational position and b) a second relative rotational position causes the first and second connecting assemblies to cooperate to draw the first and second portions axially towards each other,

the first and second connecting assemblies cooperating so that the first and second circumferentially facing surfaces confront each other with the first and second tubular elements in the second relative rotational position to thereby block relative movement of the first and second tubular elements from the second relative rotational position back into the first relative rotational position,

wherein the first and second tubular elements are positionable in a second relative axial position wherein relative movement of the first and second tubular elements from the first relative rotational position into the second relative rotational position causes the first and second connecting assemblies to draw the first and second portions axially towards each other further than with the first and second tubular elements in the first relative axial position and the first and second tubular elements moved from the first relative rotational position into the second relative rotational position,

wherein the radially outwardly facing surface on the first tubular element and radially inwardly facing surface on the second tubular element are relatively dimensioned and at least one of the radially inwardly facing surface and radially outwardly facing surface is tapered so that by reason of the tapering the radially outwardly facing surface and radially inwardly facing surface are urged against each other with a frictional force that is greater with the first and second tubular elements in the second relative rotational position than with the first and second tubular elements in the first relative rotational position.

27. (Previously presented) In combination:

a first tubular element having a first axis, a first portion with a radially outwardly facing surface and a first connecting assembly at a first circumferentially facing surface; and

a second tubular element having a second portion with a second axis, a radially inwardly facing surface, and a second connecting assembly with a second circumferentially facing surface,

the first portion extendable within the second portion so that the radially inwardly facing surface on the second tubular element surrounds the radially outwardly facing surface on the first tubular element,

the first and second tubular elements positionable in a first relative axial position wherein relative movement of the first and second tubular elements around the first and second axes between a) a first relative rotational position and b) a second relative rotational position causes the first and second connecting assemblies to cooperate to draw the first and second portions axially towards each other,

the first and second connecting assemblies cooperating so that the first and second circumferentially facing surfaces confront each other with the first and second tubular elements in the second relative rotational position to thereby block relative movement of the first and second tubular elements from the second relative rotational position back into the first relative rotational position,

wherein one of the first and second connecting assemblies comprises a first radially outwardly extending projection and the other of the first and second connecting assemblies has a first groove with a substantially uniform width in which the first projection guidingly

moves as the first and second tubular elements are changed between the first and second relative rotational positions,

wherein the first radially outwardly extending projection has an elongate shape with a length extending circumferentially relative to the one of the first and second connecting assemblies and a narrower width along the first and second axes.

28. (Cancelled)

29. (new) The method of joining first and second tubular elements according to claim 21 wherein at least one of the radially inwardly and outwardly facing surfaces is tapered so as to thereby cause the frictional force between the radially inwardly and outwardly facing surfaces to be greater with the first and second tubular elements in the second relative axial position than with the first and second tubular elements in the first axial position.

30. (new) A method of joining first and second tubular elements, said method comprising the steps of:

providing a first tubular element having a first axis, a first portion with a radially outwardly facing surface and a first connecting assembly;

providing a second tubular element having a second axis, a second portion with a radially inwardly facing surface, and a second connecting assembly;

aligning the first and second tubular elements in a preassembly state with the first and second axes substantially coincident and the first portion adjacent to the second portion;

relatively axially moving the first and second tubular elements from the preassembly state towards each other into a first relative axial position;

with the first and second tubular elements in the first relative axial position, relatively moving the first and second tubular elements around the first and second axes from a first relative rotational position into a second relative rotational position, and thereby causing the first and second connecting assemblies to cooperate so as to draw the first and second portions axially towards each other so that the first and second tubular elements achieve a second relative axial position, wherein a frictional force generated between the radially inwardly and outwardly facing surfaces on the first and second portions is greater with the first and second tubular elements in the second relative axial position than with the first and second tubular elements in the first relative axial position,

wherein the step of causing the first and second connecting assemblies to cooperate comprises causing the first and second connecting assemblies to cooperate to releasably block the first and second tubular elements in the second relative rotational position,

wherein the step of causing the first and second connecting assemblies to cooperate to cooperatively releasably block the first and second tubular elements in the second relative rotational position comprises causing circumferentially facing surfaces on the first and second connecting assemblies to confront each other; and

relatively moving the first and second tubular elements around the first and second axes to a third relative rotational position arrived at by moving the first and second tubular elements from the first relative rotational position to and beyond the second relative rotational position and wherein circumferentially facing surfaces in the first and second connecting assemblies confront each other to block movement of the first and second elements from the third relative rotational position back into the second relative rotational position.